

FORMOSAN ETHNOLOGY

RECENT political events in the East have directed public attention in Europe, more especially in France, to the large and important island of Formosa. They have shown how scanty our knowledge really is of everything relating to an island which has been known to Europeans for about three centuries, which has been actually held by an European power for twenty years, and in which for about a quarter of a century there have been three ports opened to the trade of the world. Such knowledge as we possess is derived from the works of Dutch writers of the commencement of the seventeenth century, and from fugitive papers published by one or two learned societies in Europe and the East, and especially by journals and magazines in various parts of the Far East, the names of which are hardly known beyond a limited circle of special students, some of them being extinct for years. This paucity of information regarding one of the most important islands in the world, which, moreover, lies in the fair way of a considerable portion of the trade of the world, is not due to lack of inquirers or of zeal, but to physical and ethnological obstacles in the way of research which will appear presently. Such information as could be obtained from the sources here indicated with regard to the ethnology of Formosa has been collected by M. Girard de Rialle, and arranged in two articles contributed to the latest numbers of the *Revue d'Anthropologie* (January and April, 1885). The value of these articles, besides collecting and sifting much scattered information not readily accessible, or accessible at all except in the most comprehensive national libraries, is that they contain a sound working theory on one of the perplexing problems of modern ethnology, viz. the origin of certain little-known tribes inhabiting for the most part the recesses of the chain of mountains running from north to south, but nearer to the east than the west coast of Formosa, and generally known as the Formosan aborigines.

Broadly, the population of Formosa may be divided into three classes—the immigrants from China, aborigines who have submitted to Chinese rule, and the independent tribes. It would be useless to attempt to decide which of the estimates of the number of the population is most likely to be correct, for they vary between ten millions and 300,000 souls. The Chinese immigrants may soon be dismissed. They come mostly from Canton and from the neighbouring province of Fokhien. They include amongst them large numbers of Hakkas, a people who are themselves the subject of an interesting ethnological question, which, however, we cannot discuss here beyond saying that by some students they are regarded as the representatives of pure-blooded Chinese who inhabited portions of the valley of the Yellow River before the dawn of history, while others speak of them as of Malay origin. The division of the aborigines into subjugated and free is obviously of no value for ethnological purposes, although it is convenient in certain cases. Two points which may perplex the discussion of the question can be cleared away at once. The aborigines have undoubtedly been head-hunters, like the Dyaks of Borneo and the Igorotos of Luzon, but there is no modern authority in support of the charge of cannibalism made against them by Chinese writers, especially by Ma-twan-lin in his "Encyclopædia." M. de Rialle thinks that the allegation might have been correct at an earlier period, inasmuch as the practice is known among the Battaks of Sumatra, as well as in Borneo and the Celebes. But no traces of it have appeared recently in Formosa. Another difficulty has been raised by the statement of the early Dutch writers that there is a pure black race in Formosa, of great stature, inhabiting the mountains and speaking a different language to the rest of the inhabitants. This would apparently refer to Papuans, and M. de Rialle asks

whether perhaps here, as in the Philippines, we may not perceive the existence of an old autochthonous race, or at any rate one so ancient that it may well be considered such. There would be nothing surprising in this, for in the Indian Archipelago an ethnic substratum of Papuans and Negritos has been discovered. But the statement has not been confirmed by modern explorers, some of whom have travelled through the island in order to settle the question. Neither the Chinese nor the natives have ever heard of this black race, and it is possible that a very dark tribe in the south were so called by the Dutch. But M. Paul Ibis, in his "Promenades Ethnographiques," thinks that when the Malays invaded Formosa it is not impossible they found a black race there, which they exterminated or absorbed, and other ethnologists have a theory that there was once an epoch of pure Negritos in the island. However this may be, there is now no trace of the tall black race of the Dutch writers of two hundred years ago.

The Chinese divide the aborigines of Formosa into three classes—the *Pepo-hoan*, or "barbarians of the plains," the *Sek-hoan*, or "ripe barbarians," and the *Chin-hoan*, or "green barbarians." The island, as already noticed, is divided into two unequal parts by a lofty range of mountains. On the western side, which is the nearer to China, and consequently that peopled by Chinese immigrants, the country consists for the most part of large and fertile plains. The aborigines were gradually driven back from the coast by the immigration from the mainland, and pressed towards the mountains. In course of time a considerable number submitted peacefully to the Chinese authorities and became civilised, or rather sinicised. These are the *Pepo-hoan* of the Chinese. They live on the plains and smaller hills bordering on the mountains. Here they form large villages surrounded by rich sub-tropical vegetation. In some places near the Chinese settlements they have adopted the language and habits of the conquerors, but they have preserved their ancient culture. They are fetish-worshippers. One traveller found in one of their houses a stake on which was placed the skull of a deer adorned with garlands of flowers and herbs. This he was told was the female fetish; the male, which was by its side, was simply composed of bamboos interlaced like a cradle. A jar of pure water below appeared to be the only offering made to the divine group at the moment. The women have charge of the fetishes. Dancing appears to be associated amongst them with religious ideas and rites, and from the description of their dances they appear similar to those of the Polynesians and Micronesians. M. Paul Ibis, who was present at one of these *fêtes*, states that young women, when dressed for it, presented the closest resemblance to Tagal women. In spite of the name "barbarians" given them by the Chinese, they are no less civilised than the peasants of the Celestial Empire; they are for the most part devoted to agriculture. In some places they act as intermediaries between the independent tribes and the Chinese, conveying the forest products of the former to the coast and obtaining Chinese goods in exchange. Their great stature has been noticed by all Europeans who have seen them. The hair is dressed amongst the men by being oiled and rolled around the head, and then covered with a large turban of coloured stuff. The women twist their hair into a large mat, interlaced spirally with a red ribbon. This is wound round the head, and appears above the forehead like a kind of natural diadem. The *Pepo-Hoan*, who have been least influenced by the Chinese, and who have preserved their ancient customs and dress, inhabit districts in the centre of the southern half of Formosa, especially in the valley of the Lakoli River, which, flowing almost due south, enters the sea at the harbour of Tan-Kiang. The *Sek-hoan*, the second of the Chinese divisions of the aborigines, inhabit part of the centre of the northern half of the island, as the

Pepo-hoan do the southern half. The Sek-hoan settlements are mainly in the neighbourhood of Chang-hua, slightly to the north of the 24th parallel, and in the hilly districts dividing the mountains from the plains in the west. They appear to have fully accepted the Chinese yoke, and even the village headmen are appointed by the Chinese authorities. These tribes are absolutely sedentary, and devote themselves wholly to the cultivation of rice, sugar-cane, and indigo, which they have learnt from the Chinese. They have adopted the dress and habits of their masters; they shave the top of the head and wear long queues. The women also dress like the Chinese, but they do not deform the feet. The type of these Sek-hoan appeared quite distinct from that of other Formosans to two travellers, Mr. Bullock and M. Ibis. The former describes them as tall, but feeble, with a comparatively clear skin, large bright eyes, the mouth extremely large, with thick lips, a projecting upper jaw, and teeth long and prominent. The lower part of the face is as ugly as the upper part is prepossessing. But although they bear little resemblance to the aborigines, they have still less to the Chinese and Loochooans, the only peoples amongst whom we should seek for their origin, if they are of different blood from the other Formosans. M. Ibis states that the Sek-hoan present a contrast to the Malay type in the case of the males, although a resemblance may be found among the females. He attributes their anthropological peculiarities to mixture with the Dutch two and a half centuries ago. He states that there are still old Dutch books and documents amongst them, and that the method of cultivating tobacco (which they call *tamako*, and not by a Chinese name) is similar to that of the Batavian colonies. In the extreme north, around Tamsui and Keelung, there are also groups of Sek-hoan. Driven from the coast by the Chinese, and prevented by the savage tribes in the mountains from penetrating into the interior, these have been almost exterminated. The remnants live in scattered communities among the sandy downs or in the rocky islets off the coast. M. Ibis visited one of their villages on a small island in Keelung Bay, where he found them in great destitution, but bearing evident resemblances to the Sek-hoan further south. He also noticed the Caucasian features, which they got from the connection between their ancestors and the Dutch and Spaniards of the seventeenth century. Around Tamsui the Sek-hoan are rapidly becoming extinct; absorption into the Chinese, and opium, alcohol, and small-pox will soon do their work. Many of their most prominent features are Malay, but the form of the skull is quite different, if we may rely on two specimens brought to Europe in 1868. Dr. Schetelig found the cephalic index of the living males to average 77, of the females 76; but, on the other hand, there were the Malay physiognomy and the language of these Sek-hoan to render difficult their ethnological classification. On his return to London, however, Dr. Schetelig saw the collection of Polynesian and New Zealand skulls in the Museum of the College of Surgeons, and he found amongst these remarkable analogies with the skulls collected by him in the north of Formosa. On the north-east coast, at Suwo Bay and the neighbourhood, there are other subjugated tribes called Kabaran, Sui-hoan, and the like. They are all of the Malay type, and appear to be rapidly disappearing through contact with the Chinese.

The whole mountainous region from the north to the extreme south, forming nearly the eastern half of Formosa, is inhabited by aborigines who have accepted neither the yoke nor civilisation of the Chinese. These are called the *Chin-hoan*, or "green, unripe barbarians," in contradistinction to the *Sek-hoan*, or "ripe barbarians." These live in a state of perpetual war with the Chinese, and it is alleged that the latter brought tigers to Formosa and set them loose in order that they should prey on their enemies; the latter, however, succeeded in exterminating

them. They are determined head-hunters, the young warrior commencing his career by securing a certain number of Chinese heads. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that our knowledge of these tribes should be exceedingly limited. A Spanish priest visited some of them in 1875-6, and they have been occasionally visited by Europeans who have touched on the east coast. They are represented as like the Malays, but much fairer in colour than even the Chinese. More, however, is known of the tribes in the extreme south than of those on the east coast or in the mountains. They have been heard of in Europe chiefly by their various murders of shipwrecked seamen.

The various tribes are known as Kalis, Bhotans, Koaluts, &c., and their districts have been frequently visited by European officials desirous of obtaining from them some assurance of better treatment for mariners thrown on their coast. The late Mr. Swinhoe, who visited them for this purpose, states that some of them approached the Mongol type, while in others there was an enormous development of the lower jaw. After new observations he described them as resembling the Tagals of Luzon. In 1874 the massacre of the crew of a Loochoan junk by the tribes led to a powerful Japanese expedition being despatched for their chastisement. The Kalis and Bhotans suffered so severely that their subsequent subjugation by the Chinese was rendered easy, and the Chinese Customs established a station and light-house on the south cape. An account of the expedition despatched to arrange this latter enterprise was read before the Royal Geographical Society in January last by Mr. Beazeley, the engineer employed in the work. Soon after the Japanese expedition M. Paul Ibis visited the south of Formosa, and has described nine separate tribes differing in linguistic and anthropological details. He thinks their dialects are connected with the Tagal language; seven of the nine had little physical resemblance to the members of the other two. Several other tribes have been described by other travellers, and in most cases they are marked by important peculiarities. It would be impossible, even if it were likely to serve any useful purpose, to go into details of the habits of each of these. All that is necessary for our present purpose is to note that there certainly are numerous distinct tribes amongst these independent aborigines, and that in describing them various travellers refer constantly to their resemblance to Malays, Igorrotos, Tagals, Soolooans, Dyaks, and other peoples of the Malay Archipelago. The reader will therefore be prepared for M. de Rialle's conclusion that these aborigines belong to the great ethnic family known as Malayo-Polynesian. MM. Quatrefages and Hamy speak of them in the "*Crania Ethnica*" as "analogous to the Acheenese, Lampongs, and Eastern Sundanis. They are Indonesians, closely allied to Polynesians." But there are ancient mixtures with other anthropological elements. Whether these took place in regions from which the ancient immigrants came, or in Formosa itself, will probably never be known positively. The peopling of Formosa is probably due to successive invasions, doubtless far removed from each other in point of time, by Malayo-Polynesians, and this, M. de Rialle believes, is sufficiently proved by the great differences which, notwithstanding their common anthropological origin, have been observed by travellers amongst the various mountain tribes in the island. Whether a comparative study of the Formosan dialects with those of the Philippines, Borneo, the Celebes and other parts of the Malay Archipelago, will carry the solution of the problem any farther than this remains to be seen; but there appears no immediate prospect of any student being able to study the independent tribes of Formosa. They are as remote from us, for any purpose of accurate investigation, as ever they were, and far more remote than they were from the Dutch and Spaniards nearly three centuries ago.